Research on Leadership: Running in Place or Fermenting Old Wine in a New Bottle?

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My daughter is currently a doctoral student in the Higher Education program with a concentration in Student Affairs in a southeastern university. She finally responded to my nudging that she take this step after over 15 years as a practitioner in the field. On a recent weekend trip home in the fall, 2014, we touched base about her current semester's activities with her assistantship in a Center for Leadership and Social Learning and her courses. Those discussions were based primarily upon her developing understanding of leadership through the delivery of a leadership course to undergraduate who are pursuing a leadership minor and her enrollment in a core course entitled "Leading Change". Her thoughts apparently are being influence by her study of the text for the leadership theory course-"Leadership for the 21st Century" (Roth, 1991). The selection of the book would seem to be an endorsement, at least by her professor, as being on the cutting edge of leadership research. Her developing understandings seemed to be coming together under the influence, relationships and community development perspectives.

Those discussion intrigued me to the point that I "googled" J. C. Roth and later pulled him up on ERIC, my two basic research tools at this stage as I move into a retirement phase of my life. I found that Roth, who apparently has been a lead person in advancing our understanding of leadership in the latter part of the 20th Century and beyond. He articulated a definition of leadership that seemed to be s

consistent with my, perhaps dated, thoughts relative to leadership and organizational life. He took the position that leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.

Looking further into ERIC listings, I came across a link in which Roth had positioned his emerging thoughts along with others interested in the elusive leadership topic over time. In the last few slides in that presentation, Roth's contemporary definition was extended as being composed of four basic components, each of which is essential and must be present, if a particular relationship is to be called leadership: (1) The relationship is based on influence not based on authority but on persuasion. (2) Leaders and followers are the people in this relationship as equals with varying levels of activity and influence. (3) Leaders and followers intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes. (4) Leadership is not what leaders do. Rather, leadership is what leaders and followers do together for the collective good. In several places as we move forward with this article efforts will be made to relate Roth to the more recent

I easily found two of the key words referenced by my daughter in her discussions with me in the four points of departure—influence and relationships. Her addition of community development would seem to be emerging as an umbrella concept. When one looks through the definition as presented it seems apparent that such relationships between the leader and followers occur in some organizational

discussions of Professional Learning Communities as advanced by Hord (2005).

setting. She seemingly has taken the easy step in looking through the four components as she added "community development" to her developing list of leadership concepts. Terms such as "purpose, real change and collective good" would seem to support such a step. It seems to be an easy step to substitute "community" for "organization" in the discussion as she has. Previously referenced, Hord took a similar step in her book.

I found myself in quick agreement with Roth's positions and decided to look back to see how they related to my longstanding interest in leadership from an academic and practitioner perspective. I was interested in seeing if Roth's thoughts are more than "Old Wine in New Bottles"? Another way to phrase the question might be: "Are they more than just an evolutionary continuation of the earlier transformational thoughts about leadership being advanced in the middle of the 20th Century?"

The basis for my inquiry goes back to my dissertation (Author, 1966). In that document which will be discussed in some detail later, I explored the possible relationships between psychological distance of the leader (school principal) as assessed and discussed by Fiedler in an article format and in a book (1967) and the organizational climate of schools as assessed by the developing Organizational Climate Descriptive Questionnaire (OCDQ) instrument. (Halpin and Croft, 1963) The OCDQ was an extension of these two researchers' earlier focus on the behavior of the leader through the Leadership Behavior Descriptive Questionnaire (LBDQ) in the Ohio State Leadership Studies. In the review of the

literature for my study, I traveled some of the same inquiry roads traveled in the previously noted slide presentation shared by Roth on ERIC. As I write these thoughts over 50 years later; I am certain that as a fairly young doctoral student with limited leadership/administrative experience at the time, not nearly as effectively as he and others have done since then.

I stayed fairly current with the research literature during stops at two Research 1 institutions until the earlier 80s. I was employed primarily in administrative positions with academic appointments that allowed me to teach in the leadership/administration area and to work with doctoral students. With my ability to move doctoral students who were searching for topics and my own limited academic time, I continued my interests in the study of leadership. After serving as president of three, relatively small, but developing colleges for almost 20 years, I had the opportunity to reactivate my work with doctoral students and committees on a full/part-time basis for some eight years.

As noted in the opening paragraph, I am now moving toward full retirement. With some time on my hands, I have started trying to reflectively record my recollections on paper in an orderly manner. In doing so, I started with a collection of reflections from my childhood though by undergraduate days as a student-athlete. My daughter promises me that she will eventually get to that section after her doctoral study is hopefully concluded successfully, and convert it to a "reading document" for our three grandchildren with appropriate pictures and related items from the past.

While moving through my K-12 experiences in a single building that opened when I started kindergarten, my reflections brought me to grips with the way "things were" with respect to race in public education and in the larger community back then. Those thoughts moved me to prepare a document that captures my "reflections on growing up southern with respect to race relations" as somewhat of a transitional step between my earlier experiences and my professional involvement in a career of some 55 years in public education at all levels. Those reflections were fine tuned and are out for publication consideration (Author, October, 2014). Excerpts from the larger document have been accepted for publication in university/college of education outlets by two of the Research 1 universities where I had extended stops along the way.

I moved to a collection of professional reflections based upon past individual publications and joints ones with my colleagues and with doctoral students who accepted my nudges in their searches for a topic. I have retained or been able to retrieve almost every publication from the past in a hardcopy or digital format. In somewhat of an abstracting manner, each article that seems to relate to my look at them through Roth's positions will be discussed in moving the current article along. In doing so, I will routinely "darken" the phrases, terms and concepts that seem to me to be related to Roth's thinking as presented in the introductory paragraphs.

In the mid-1960s, nearing the dissertation stage, I was nudged by my doctoral committee chair in the direction of the concept of psychological distance of the

leader as being defined and assessed by Fred Fiedler (1967) and its relationship to organizational effectiveness in the school setting. Those explorations subsequently led to Halpin and Croft's then recently developed OCDQ instrument that had been produced in an extension of their earlier interest in leader behavior as assessed by the widely used LBDQ. The OCDQ was being tentatively advanced as a possible measure of the organizational effectiveness of schools. The accepted doctoral proposal attempted to replicate Fiedler's research in an exploratory manner in the school setting by taking a look at the psychological distant behavior of the school principal and its relationship to the Openness-Closedness of their respective schools and to selected dimensions of the OCDQ--Thrust as a measure of principal behavior and Esprit as a measure of teacher morale (Author, 1966, 1969).

In an attempt to possibly explain the lack of support of the three directional hypotheses in the study that had been influenced by Fiedler's positive results in a number of organizational settings, the near-panic level doctoral student had come across the early results from Gross and Herriott (1965) on Executive Professional Leadership (EPL) of the leader. Those sociologically based researchers defined EPL as "the efforts of an executive (the principal) of a professionally staffed organization (the school) to a definition of his role that stresses his obligation to improve the quality of staff performance". Earlier, Halpin and Croft in their efforts to define the organizational climate of schools had addressed themselves to the principal-staff relationship with what seemed to be similar concerns when

they placed special emphasis upon the unique role of the **principal's behavior** in **creating an effective organizational climate** in which **he and other staff members could initiate and consummate acts of leadership**.

I was able to implicate my doctoral chair in my defense through a position that he brought with him when he came south from the University of Oregon (Abbott, 1965). In expressing his concern that the bureaucratic organization tends to limit innovation and change especially in professionally staffed organizations, he discussed his developing position in class and wrote that:

....an institution......where superior performance occurs when superior technical competence is found at the base of the hierarchy, among the teachers, and where change must be implemented by those who possess this superior competence....... p.50

Abbott's position seemed to imply that teachers should be considered as professionals with the potential for further growth. His position seemed to me then, and reflectively now, to parallel the position being advanced by Gross and Herriott relative to the role of principals in supporting and being held accountable for the continuing professional development of their teachers and supporting staff.

Abbott supported my interest in looking into possible relationships between the leadership concepts and organizational variables between the two research teams.

The promising correlations resulting from this exploratory look were published (Author, 1970). Those results made it clear to me as I had begun to try to put some "words on paper" in pursuit of tenure and promotion considerations, that these two research teams were "in the same church if not in the same pew". **Executive Professional Leadership (EPL)** was found to be positively correlated to the key dimensions of **Thrust and Espirit from the OCDQ**. Viewing those result though my developing understanding of Roth, I feel safe in taking an early position in the current article that the two research teams and Roth were apparently in that same "church at least, or possibly, on the same pew".

Another doctoral student who had special interest in the influence of the teacher in discussions with me as her doctoral chair brought the Rosenthal and Jacobsen research, **Pygmalion in the Classroom** (1968) up in our talks. She and I eventually took an exploratory look through the views of Rosenthal and Jacobsen at the related and earlier work in the business/organizational world of Livingston in **Pygmalion in Management** (1969). We feel that we were successful in a relatively short article to link the concerns advanced in those two publications to the expectations advanced by Gross and Herriott's research. (Author and Loposer, 1977). The article concludes with the position that:

Paralleling the summary comments of Livingston, the evidence seems to indicate if the principals with a **positive perception of themselves** and who are skilled in **communicating high but obtainable levels of expectations**

to their respective staffs, their **self-concepts will grow**, their **capabilities will develop** and their **performance will be high**. More often than they
might think, the principals can be **Pygmalion** and contribute to the **development of professionals** rather than just practitioners.

In her developmental work with the Southwest Educational Development

Laboratory, Hord (1997) may have put a better face on things with her use of
the term "Professional Learning Communities" (PLCs) that officially introduces
the concept of community development into the dialogue. The terms says to me,
reflectively, that professional performance is the goal for all participants in the
educative process with administrators having a responsibility to create
opportunities for its development; and that they have to be willing to unleash it
on behalf of the students we serve. As defined by Hord in a marketing piece for
her subsequent book (2005):

"Professional Learning Communities, or PLCs, is a school improvement model that continues to grow in popularity as a means to build capacity, embed professional development, create a positive school culture, grow accountability, and increase student achievement. This book provides an overview for why PLCs are needed & what they can accomplish."

It seems to me that one could darken the complete description of the book

when reviewing it through Roth's positions and thoughts. I have been thoroughly exposed to the PLC discussions during the past two years when I was employed on a part-time basis to work with doctoral students through limited directing and service on committees. Those experiences have increased even further my view of the importance of community development. Such importance seems to parallel the concern of Roth in that direction. I cannot run down the four Roth positions discussed in the introduction, without realizing that the effective personal interactions of individuals in groups or communities with shared goals and values, are closely related to the position advanced by Hord.

Another doctoral student undertook perhaps the most challenging and complicated research effort of any student in my work with doctoral students at three Research 1 institutions spread over almost 50 years. Initially, he was partially supported in his doctoral studies through his work with a Kettering Foundation Program, Individually Guided Education (IGE, 1971). IGE schools were attempting to implement non-graded primary and upper elementary schools with team teaching as the selected instructional mode. The IGE program operated in coordination with the Auburn Center for Problems Occasioned by the Desegregation of School (Auburn Center). During the late 60s and early 70s, The Auburn Center's primary goal was the assistance of schools and districts to develop and implement plans that would

move them in a unitary direction with respect to race while improving educational results.

Interest in organizational training (OT) as being developed by Schmuck and Runkel (1970) at the University of Oregon as an initiative of the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration (CASEA) developed among the Center staff. Its two developers advanced it as an approach for educators who wished to bring about constructive organizational change in every level of the educational enterprise. A comprehensive handbook (1971) was subsequently designed as a guide for institutional reform and restructuring, site-based management, staff development, strategic planning, team building, and total quality programs. Based on their belief that good organization provides the soil from which good teaching can grow, the handbook was addressed to any educator who seeks to lift the morale and achievement levels of students through more humane, consistent, and effective management and instruction.

OT seemed to be compatible with the school-based IGE efforts that were underway through the Center. Seemingly compatible with Roth's concepts, The CASEA approach involved a modified laboratory (community) approach for **the total** staff of a school that **attempted to improve organizational characteristics** of a school by improving the **interpersonal communication skills** and **organizational**

problem-solving abilities of the school staff. While organizational problem solving was stressed strongly in the CASEA materials, the actual focus on it in lab/workshop activities seemed quite minimal to the Auburn Center staff. With time provided by an increase in workshop days, an approach to problem solving through group discussion developed at Auburn University by a professor of Speech Communication (Smith, 1965) was added to the agenda. Gentry had included Dr. Smith's course in meeting the out-of-school of education requirement for his degree. Students found the course to be most helpful as they considered the emerging developments in organizational life.

For his doctoral study, the student used a modified case study approach supplemented by several organizational assessment measures including the OCDQ. A control school with similar characteristic within the system and three control schools from neighboring systems that were going through the same school desegregation process were included in the study. In a rather lengthy report of the research (Gentry and Author, 1974), the conclusions from the research were reported as generally positive found that OT had a meaningful, immediate, short-range impact on the principal and staff and a differential impact on the principal and on the staff with the impact on the staff reported as being more positive and potentially lasting. It was reported, probably not unexpected, that the principal had some difficulty in coming to grips with the expectation that he move in a shared decision making direction. It was further concluded that one year is not a sufficient

period of time for the OT experiences to transfer into meaningful organizational development results.

After reviewing the Gentry article in some detail in this reflective process, I was struck by my not being a bit uncomfortable with the use of the term, **organizational trainings** by Schmuck and Runkel as contrasted to **organizational development** that carries a **goal of developing professionals who are able to become more than they might have been with the right type of organizational support** over time. In developing the bibliography for the current article, I noted also that their Center carried the "organizational training " phrase in its title. Such a lack of personal awareness of the difference at the time is, perhaps related to my acceptance without question of many of the practices related to race as I grew up in the South (Author, October, 2014).

Moving ahead, I am going to share from some of my individual "words-on-paper" efforts and some advanced in cooperation with other colleagues. Those efforts have obviously been influenced by, and hopefully build upon, the professional out put of others as cited to this point. They are shared in keeping with my belief that they contribute to the continuing study of and discussions about the importance of leadership. I will continue the "darkening" of key terms and phrases as I continue.

I returned to higher education in the late 1960s after some brief stops with leadership and administrative responsibilities at the secondary school level and in two federal projects with school improvement goals. I brought with me some valuable experiences in which I had benefitted from leaders who took a **Pygmalion** approach (my high school and college coaches, my principal in my first educational employment, my doctoral chair and the dean with whom I soon began to work as an assistant dean—working with those who remembered me as a graduate student around here). Those professionals really believed that "**Delegation**" had to be fully **delegated to the operational level** if the concept was to have the **developmental impact** it could have on **individuals** and the **organizations** in which they worked.. I found some strongly held positions among my then colleague professors who had earlier had me in class on this matter. They tended to take the position that "Authority" to act could be delegated but "Responsibility" could not be delegated. Hence, I attempted to put down on paper in a form that was eventually accepted for publication my developing thoughts. The article (Author, 1972) concludes with the position that:

It is hoped that, however, the article has gone at least a step or two beyond just raising the question. Hopefully, the point has been made that we no longer can respond to the question with the age-old reply—authority but never responsibility! Possibly, the references cited, particularly the more recent works of Herzburg (1987), with his meaningful discussion of responsibility as a motivator and his concept of job enrichment, will provide some directional thoughts for boards and superintendents (an

other organizational leaders) as they move further into the "Age of Accountability". p. 398

In an article written for the **Community College Journal**, Atwell and Author (1971) responded to an earlier article in the publication by Richardson (1970). Richardson revisited the Abbott position discussed earlier in advocating the position that complex organizations need to move away from **the bureaucratic**, **line-staff organizational** model primarily based upon his belief that such a model depends "on a level of internal **cooperation and communication that is rarely achieved** in most complex institutions, educational or otherwise. Richardson readily recognized this **necessity for effective communication** in his provocative and well-conceived essay". However, the two young assistant professors thought the support presented by Richardson took a somewhat negative, less than optimistic, approach in providing reasons for moving in a more open organizational direction.

In responding to Richardson, and hopefully in partially moving the discussion forward, they took the more positive position that "there are sound theoretical and philosophical reasons which transcend the readjustment or reactive motives which are cited by many as arguments for its adoption" The authors subsequently presented "a sufficient rationale which might be of "aid and comfort' to community college leaders (and leaders of other educational institutions) as they move to faculty, administrative staff and student involvement in the organizational processes in their respective organizations. That position seems to parallel

somewhat the more global and organizational/community development approach advanced by Roth.

The article concluded with the suggestion that careful consideration should be given to the following questions (these questions have been slightly edited through the impact of the reflective process in developing the current article):

Does your institution embody an **administrative team concept in its organizational configuration?**

How do the members of **administrative team view the individuals** who make up your faculty and staff?

How effectively is your institution functioning to **encourage and support** staff members, individually and collectively, to recognize and develop their capabilities to the fullest extent possible?

How effectively is the **creative potential of your staff** being utilized? What organizational provisions are made raising and responding to **questions and development of a critical nature from a futures orientation?** p. 19

My following reflections on the value of strategic planning were written after 17+ years of service as president of two community colleges with host role relationships with area institutions that made completion of the baccalaureate degree possible. (Author, 2000). Initially, I had been influenced by George Keller when he was an invited presenter to a neighboring institution in the University System of Georgia. That institution's president had graciously opened his presentation to leadership personnel from across the system. I left that session with a copy of his then recently

published book (George Keller, 1983). In his presentation and in the book his repeated phrase that strategic planning was the key to closing the loop on institutional planning and decision making rang true with me. Not having enough of Keller, I attended a pre-conference workshop at the annual meeting of the Society for University and College Planning that year in Vancouver, In the interest of brevity at this point, I am attempting to paraphrase Keller's message and relate them to Roth's position through bolding selected words and phrases:

Look and think beyond the organization to the **community it serves and beyond.**

Think strategically from a data-based perspective.

Focus on the **whole institution** through **collective thinking**.

Plan with leadership **from the top down** giving attention to **faculty and staff participation**.

Link the developed plan to **budget decisions**.

Value out-of-the box thinking and risk-taking.

Convert the planning process to **strategic** decision making.

Be mindful of the **future** and think ahead.

Those professional growth opportunities for a new president were timely and meshed effectively with the institutions preparation for an upcoming accreditation visit and in subsequent years.

After those administrative stops, I moved into my first full-time teaching position with little administrative demands. I planned to assist in spreading the word on the

value of strategic planning and decision making as advanced by Keller. I firmly believe that Keller's approach is equally applicable to the any level of educational organization. My own experiences in applying his concepts over the previous 17-plus years made me very comfortable in doing so. I add with a bit of personal pride, that I received a note from George Keller indicating that he felt we had captured his thoughts, apparently implemented them well and reported such effectively in the article.

I noted in the previous paragraph that I had moved into a full-time academic position shortly after writing the strategic planning article. As a personal-assessment/futures-oriented activity, I had students in early educational leadership classes to work through a number of "values activities" and with some processing the students were requested to list in a bulleted manner their initial organizational values as they were beginning their careers in educational leadership. Working with students in cohort groups, we would periodically return to those beginning lists for further processing as their academic and employment experiences moved along.

One of my students, who later became a school superintendent, caught me by surprise in class one day during a further processing session with a request that I share with them my personal list of organizational values. In making the request, he asked that my response should be based upon my years in leadership positions and having moved numbers of students through the values process. I did so with the class in a reflective manner with the following results:

Organizationally, I value:

Diversity as an asset.

Openness in internal communications, planning and decision making.

Information-based decision making.

Collaboration and teamwork.

Individual and collective responsibility and accountability.

Openness to risk taking and innovation.

Equity in access and opportunity for faculty, staff and students.

Equity in allocation of resources.

Quality.

Students and their potential to become who and what they might.

Over time in classes and personally, I extended the list of values to include a list of implementations steps that have grown from those values and have given direction to my organizational leadership over time. That list is shared with a continuation of bolding in an effort to link the thoughts again to Roth and the supporting discussions presented to this point:

The Organizational Leader must:

Develop a 'shared vision' of the organization's future.

Develop a "Grand We" approach.

Build **strong interpersonal relationships** across the organization.

Create opportunities for individual and collective growth.

Provide and encourage **developmental feedback** in the organization.

Recognize and respond to **individual and collective accomplishments**.

Encourage everyone to 'pay attention to the little things'.

While pulling some materials together for my daughter's potential use in working with undergraduates students in a "leadership" sequence of courses as part of her graduate assistantship, I ran across those lists in a stack of materials being reviewed. It is my hope that she has found them as useful as I have in trying to bring this piece toward closure. Those values and organizational approaches as updated over time were published in an edited format (Author, 2013).

This reflective look through personal and joint positions shared in the collections of articles from the past, along with the **bolded** terms and concepts shared along the way, make it clear to me that, "Roth and others along the way have poured some old wine into a new bottle and shaken it up a bit--producing a more valuable bottle of wine"!" I am certain that Roth, Hord and others have filled several "pews in the leadership church" as did the Halpin and Croft duo, the team of Gross and Herriott, Rosenthal, Richardson, Schmuck and Runkel, Herzberg, Keller...... I conclude with a degree of caution that the major author and some of his students and colleagues may have partially filled at least one "pew" along the way.

It should be apparent from the paragraphs above that I became intrigued by the concept of Executive Professional Development (EPL) as described and advanced by Gross and Herriott. I noted in the use of ERIC as my basic research retrieval tool in developing this article that only four links to their work were pulled up under their names. The Halpin and Croft descriptor produced 20 citations with 25 links to Fred

Fiedler. It remains somewhat a mystery to me that Gross and Herriott's EPL concept received such little attention in the continuing study of leadership. One possible explanation may be that their research came from their sociological base and fell underneath the research interest of educational researchers.

More directly, the reflective process reported in this article to a degree has covered the emergence of thought about the elusive concept of leadership. Based upon it, I have reached the conclusion that our understandings have been "running in place" or in a degree of "stagnation" since the mid 1960s, The "definable shifts" in thinking from (1) a study of the leader, (2) a focus on leader behavior and (3) the organizational context of leader and follower behavior were in place to a significant degree when I worked on the literature review and subsequent efforts to explain the findings in my dissertation. A number of researchers and authors; including my students, colleagues and I, have primarily been "stirring the contents in the pot with little additional ingredients added". However, I believe that the "brewing of the contents" has moved us to a better understanding of "organizations as communities in need of almost supportive, family-type relationships" if they are to move in a productive direction.

While not wanting to move this discussion in a potentially nonacademic and controversial direction for some, it might be noted that the emphasis on the value of "community" had been utilized some time ago by a potential female candidate for president. Her position is in concert with the position I have taken in multiple letters

to the editors over time and more recently in an article format (Author: March, 2014). The public schools must stop being "society's kicking post" and be moved into a greater partnership with the larger community, especially parents and significant other adults, in support of students who will be our future. Further, our current president might have gotten better use out of his past if it had been captured under the more positive term, "community developer" rather than "community organizer".

My daughter has contributed to this article conceptually through its several versions and to its need for "editing assistance" for a former math teacher with an engineering degree that stills needs such. It is hoped that the article will be reviewed successfully and eventually shared as an academic publication. If so, it will be with a measure of personal pride that my daughter will be listed as a co-author with her proud father.

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